



## Color, Stitch and Carry

### Color, Stitch, and Carry South Burlington Library Children's class By *Diana Snyder*

Embroidery taught by the Green Mountain Chapter has become an annual activity during the South Burlington Library's summer program in Vermont. A half-day class for eight-to-twelve-year olds is often based on the theme for the summer. After the popularity of the 2004 Color, Stitch, and Carry class, however, this same theme was repeated in 2005.

#### **Organization**

The library coordinated the date and time of the class with the chapter, advertised, enrolled students, and purchased all supplies. No participation fees were charged. There was a limit of twelve students, and usually there was a waiting list. The chapter selected the project, provided the visual aids, instructor, and assistants. The objective of each class was to have the students be creative while learning basic embroidery stitches.

We taught the students how to use fabric crayons to draw a picture as well as basic stitches to embellish a design on a tote bag or fanny pack. At the end of the program, the students were given supplies to carry home in their embroidered bag or pack that they could use for future projects outside of the classroom.

#### **The Program**

Each student received a paper bag with their name on it. Inside the bag was a nametag, box of fabric crayons, square of cotton fabric, piece of cord, and embroidery hoop. Needles were previously threaded with pearl cotton sizes 5 and 8 in various colors to speed the start of stitching. Some students were then individually taught how to thread needles.

Learning the basic stitches started the agenda. Each step was first demonstrated with heavy thread on fabric. Students were shown how to place the fabric in the hoop and how to anchor the thread by using a waste knot.

There were no designs drawn on their fabrics, and each child was encouraged to have the stitches create the design. We started with the running stitch which expanded to a double-running stitch. A shape was then drawn and filled in with satin stitches. Cross stitches followed, in a row, then freeform in all sizes and shapes. Couching a cord was the final step. It was interesting to see that some students created a planned design while others let the placement be freeform.

Threads were purposely located at the end of the table so that the students had to get up to change colors. After stitching the basics (about 45 minutes) it was time for exercise.

#### **Color**

Each student selected a project – a tote bag or fanny pack – to determine the size of a design. A sketch was then done on tissue paper in pencil and colored with fabric crayons on the reverse side to give the mirror image necessary for letters. An EGA member ironed the design onto the project fabric.

#### **Stitch**

Little suggestion was needed as to what stitch to use. Cross stitches became bike wheel spokes; running stitches or couching became letters; and satin stitches filled flowers.

**Carry**

When completed, each student received a small charm to put on the project design or on the zipper pull. Into the tote or fanny pack went the extra supplies and a handout of the stitch diagrams for future embroidery projects.

**Evaluation**

The library sets a project time limit because attention spans at this age can usually handle a maximum of 1.5 hours. We requested trying our desired 3 hours, as we knew this would be about 2.5 hours of lesson, once participants had arrived, settled down, and introductions were made. This timeframe worked well, with simple projects getting completed and students eagerly discussing what they will do on their own. In the first session there was a problem with sign-ups, no-shows, and latecomers. This was resolved by contacting those on the waiting list. Participation included both boys and girls and an occasional mother, aunt, or other adult sitting in. A few children returned the following summer, and they were encouraged to expand on the stitches as a challenge.

*Diana Snyder is a former director of education and a member of Green Mountain Chapter.*